



2002 MICHIGAN DEER HUNTING PROSPECTS

THE STATEWIDE FORECAST

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If weather permits, the 2002 deer harvest is expected to exceed 500,000 deer, or about the size of our entire deer herd of 1970. There will be more than 10 million days of deer hunting recreation during archery, firearm, and muzzleloading seasons combined, which is more deer hunting than is provided in any other state or Canadian province. Deer hunting in Michigan is big business. An expected 760,000 individuals will spend more than \$500 million for food, lodging, transportation, and equipment to pursue deer hunting in Michigan.

The expected harvest of antlered deer (258,000) should be higher than the 2001 harvest of 235,271 when unseasonably warm temperatures caused deer to move less. The expected antlerless harvest of 248,000 is higher than the 2001 antlerless harvest of 228,435.

2002 Deer Season Expectations					
Hunting Season *	Hunters	Hunter-Days	Harvest		Totals
			Antlered	Antlerless	
Archery	320,000	4,500,000	70,000	51,000	121,000
Regular Firearm	700,000	4,800,000	175,000	150,000	325,000
Youth	17,000	30,000	5,000	2,000	7,000
Muzzleloading	180,000	800,000	8,000	20,000	28,000
Early, Late, DMA, Antlerless				25,000	25,000
Totals	760,000 **	10,130,000	258,000	248,000	506,000

* Archery deer hunting season extends from October 1 through November 14 and December 1 through January 1. Firearm season is November 15 through 30, and muzzleloading season is December 6 through 15 in the Upper Peninsula and December 13 through 22 in the Lower Peninsula. Early (October 12 to October 20) antlerless firearm deer hunting is in special regulations counties. Late antlerless firearm season is December 23 through January 1, on private land in some areas of the state.

** Many deer hunters participate in more than one season. About 760,000 different individuals are expected to hunt deer in 2002.

Biologists estimate Michigan's fall whitetail population to be about the same as it has been in recent years, above the statewide goal. Most of the deer population (about 80 percent) resides on private land. Our goal is to maintain a quality deer herd that is in balance with its habitat to yield healthy fawns, does, and bucks.

Upper Peninsula

Deer in the Upper Peninsula (UP) experienced a moderate to mild winter as indicated by the winter severity index. Winter losses were minimal and fawn production was good across much of the UP. The highest deer numbers will be seen in the south-central part of the UP (Menominee, Delta, Dickinson, Iron, and southern Marquette counties). The UP buck harvest is expected to be near normal, which will produce a good buck harvest. Some counties in the UP still have more deer than desired by the Department. Antlerless deer hunting opportunities on private farm lands this year in the UP may help to reduce the population and increase herd health.

Northern Lower Peninsula

The deer herd in the northern Lower Peninsula (LP) is about the same or slightly lower than in 2001. Antler development will be good in 1½-year-olds, and deer weights should also be good this fall. Buck harvest is expected to be similar or slightly higher than in years past. The antlerless deer harvest is expected to be down as well. The herd in this part of the state was intentionally reduced from a peak in 1989. At that time, car-deer crashes and crop damage were at unacceptable, record levels. This year the herd still remains over goal. The Department is responding with antlerless deer hunting areas and licenses to address deer numbers in many northern Michigan units, especially private land units. There are 21,034 square miles of land open to take antlerless deer in 2002, the same as in 2001 and 2000. In addition, to help eradicate bovine tuberculosis (TB) in deer and reduce winter starvation losses, a large number of licenses to take antlerless deer in the bovine TB positive counties are available.

Southern Lower Peninsula

The southern Michigan deer herd appears to be stabilizing in some areas. Deer hunters should see a good number of deer this year. With the intentional reduction of the population in southern Michigan during the past few years, fewer antlered bucks are expected to be taken this fall. However, the 2002 herd remains at or above the desired levels in some areas, with the number of deer in southern Michigan exceeding public tolerance for damage. The Department is responding to concerns of too many deer in this part of the state with significant numbers of antlerless deer licenses available for hunting on private lands. Southern Michigan should produce some of the best white-tailed deer hunting in the nation for both antlered and antlerless deer. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has more than 80 deer check stations set up to help evaluate and monitor Michigan's deer herd. Hunters are encouraged to bring their deer to a check station. By bringing in their deer or deer head, hunters can share valuable information with the Department and earn a 2002 Deer Management Cooperator patch.

Stewardship

Today white-tailed deer in most parts of the state live in the near absence of natural predators. Furthermore, the whitetails' ability to adapt to the variety of habitats across the state has resulted in our deer herd growing to nearly two million animals. To those who watch or hunt deer this is exciting, but to many urban and rural landowners, deer are often considered to be a problem. Without controls, most deer populations increase toward overabundance. In effect, the deer themselves become their own worst enemy. The number of deer in an area depends on the quality and quantity of habitat, deer productivity, and the rate of deer loss. Deer in most parts of Michigan produce an annual surplus. Harvesting deer through hunting helps to keep the deer herd in balance with its habitat and healthy. The bottom line is that surplus deer die, from one cause or another. A regulated hunter-harvest of both sexes of deer not only is possible but also is necessary to maintain a healthy and thriving deer population. Thus, today's hunter plays a vital role as a predator.

Western Upper Peninsula Management Unit

(Baraga, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Marquette, Menominee, Ontonagon and west ½ of Alger counties)

Contact: Jim Hammill, 906-875-6622

Winter weather plays a major role in determining the size of the deer herd in the west UP. Fortunately, the winter of 2001-2002 was among the mildest on record, resulting in minimal over-winter losses of deer. Furthermore, production of fawns was rated as good to excellent by field biologists this summer. Deer fared especially well in the southern counties that lie within the "low snowfall zone." As usual, highest deer numbers this fall will be in the southern portions of Menominee, Delta, Dickinson, and Iron counties, particularly in agricultural landscapes. In more northern areas of the west UP, deer numbers are expected to be similar to last year—perhaps a little higher in some localities.

Landowners and hunters who participated in the early seasons this fall have reported seeing good numbers of bucks. Antler development appears to be decent. Acorn crops are reportedly good in some areas and average in others. Preseason scouting to identify food sources and movement corridors will pay dividends. Hunters will likely encounter a "normal" number of 1.5-year-old bucks this year in contrast to the depressed number encountered last season. However, older-aged bucks may be in shorter supply due to increased harvest pressure on them last year when yearling bucks were scarce.

Hunters are reminded that special regulations are in place in Deer Management Units (DMUs) 122, 152, 155, and 252. These units, which mainly lie within Dickinson, Delta, Marquette, and Alger counties, are Quality Deer Management (QDM) test areas that are intended to produce a more balanced sex ratio and a deer population in balance with the habitat. Bucks must have 3 or more points on one side to be legal in these units. Private Land antlerless deer licenses are still available in some DMUs in the west UP. These licenses can be purchased from license agents until the quotas are reached.

Hunters are encouraged to have their deer examined at one of the 14 deer check stations that will be operated in the west UP this fall. Biologists will collect information on the age and condition of the deer, and hunters will receive a collectable Deer Management Cooperator patch for their efforts. Hunters should be aware that several species of animals are either fully protected by law or are allowed to be taken at times other than firearm deer season. Wolves and moose are fully protected year-round, and coyotes and bobcats may not be hunted during firearm deer season.

EASTERN UPPER PENINSULA MANAGEMENT UNIT

(Chippewa, east ½ Alger, Luce, Mackinac and Schoolcraft counties)

Contact: Tom Weise at 906-293-5131

Overall hunters can expect about the same number of deer this season as they did last year. Deer numbers are still good and will provide excellent hunting opportunities. The first half of last winter was mild, but the winter extended late into the spring. This may have reduced fawn survival, which could affect the number of yearlings in the herd for the 2003 season. The summer was generally warm with adequate rainfall so the deer should be going into the winter in good condition.

Other factors, such as weather, will play a major role in determining the type of season we have this year. Weather influences deer movements, hunter activity, and access to hunting areas.

We will not collect heads for TB in the Upper Peninsula during the 2002 season. However, we need to collect 50 deer heads from Alger and Mackinac counties for Chronic Wasting Disease testing. We will be asking hunters in these two counties to help us by donating their deer heads for testing.

Eastern Alger and Schoolcraft counties

Hunters will find more deer and deer hunters in the southern portion of the unit. The agricultural areas tend to support a higher deer population than forested areas; deer from farm country tend to be at a higher nutritional plane and therefore support larger antlers than animals of the same age in forested systems.

Deer numbers decrease from south to north to a point where they are quite low within the Lake Superior snowbelt. Antler development will generally be reduced in comparison to animals in the farming areas, but the buck-to-doe ratio is somewhat higher in the north. The northern areas have some of the lowest hunter densities providing a place to hunt for those who like to get away.

Chippewa and East Mackinac counties

Deer numbers are above the desired population level for Chippewa and east Mackinac counties. Higher deer densities are to be found on private lands and particularly in the agricultural areas. Overall, deer densities are generally higher in the southern portions of the area and thin out as one travels north. Hunters can expect to see more deer than last year due in part to the low harvest in 2001 and to the mild conditions last winter.

On Drummond Island, hunters can expect more deer than last year with an abundance of antlerless deer in the population. The "no spike" rule is still in effect for Drummond Island, so hunters should be aware of that rule.

NORTHEAST MANAGEMENT UNIT

(Alcona, Alpena, Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Crawford, Emmet, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle and Roscommon counties)

Contact: Glen Matthews, 989-732-3541

The Northeast Management Unit will begin the fall season with a deer population that is slightly smaller than in 2001. Buck harvests should be as good as or better than in recent years; hunters will likely see above average antler development in bucks, similar to 2001. The antlerless harvest is expected to be down this year due to the decrease in the number of public land antlerless permits.

Best success rates will be experienced in the mixed agricultural and forest land areas of Iosco, Ogemaw, and western Antrim and Charlevoix counties. Hunters in Alpena and Alcona counties will have good success rates, though somewhat lower than in recent years. Public lands in Alcona, Crawford, Montmorency, and Roscommon counties will provide good opportunities to hunt deer.

Acorn production is good. Hunters should consider how mast crops will affect deer distribution and plan accordingly. Deer will also be foraging on the ground in open areas, farm fields, and lowlands until snow cover.

There is a continuing need for deer samples for the bovine TB surveillance effort. Successful deer hunters are encouraged to bring their deer to DNR check stations throughout the state. During the firearm season, all stations that were open last year will be operating, except in Charlevoix County where the check site is moving from Boyne City to Boyne Falls.

Very few elk are accidentally shot by deer hunters; however, those coming to the elk range in southern Cheboygan, northern Otsego, southwest Presque Isle, and Montmorency counties are reminded to be careful and avoid the unintended shooting of an elk.

NORTHWEST MANAGEMENT UNIT

(Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Lake, Leelanau, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Wexford counties)

Contact: Penney Melchoir, 231-775-9727

In the majority of this Management Unit, overall deer populations are expected to be slightly lower as a result of encouraging the harvest of antlerless deer in recent seasons to bring those populations closer to goal. However, the past winter was mild and we experienced good fawn production and survival in the central and southern counties, so there should still be plenty of good hunting opportunities. We anticipate the buck harvest to be down slightly in most of the northern and central counties and about the same as last year in the southern three counties.

The northern counties (Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau) have lower deer numbers compared to the last four-five years (with the exception of Kalkaska County) because of efforts to lower populations, via antlerless permits, closer to goal levels. To allow short-term stabilization of the population, fewer antlerless permits were issued for private lands, and none for public lands. Reduced antlerless permits will result in fewer does and fawns in the harvest, but archery pressure on either sex remains relatively high on state lands close to the heavily populated Traverse City area. The buck harvest will be somewhat reduced from last year, although a higher proportion of yearling bucks should be available. Acorns are spotty, but corn crops are much better than last year. Best bets will be around standing corn on private lands in southern Leelanau County or in the Buckley-Kingsley area, where local deer populations are higher than average for the area. Deer populations are stable and just above goal populations in Kalkaska County and the buck harvest should be very close to last year, but more yearlings should be out there. Antlerless harvest should be up slightly with a few more permits issued to nudge the population down slightly. The southeast part of the county should offer some good opportunities for public land hunting, with decent deer numbers and a moderate acorn crop.

For the central counties (Lake, Manistee, Mason, Missaukee, Osceola, and Wexford), hunters can expect to see slightly lower deer numbers from last year as a result of encouraging the harvest of antlerless deer in recent seasons, with the exception of Manistee County where numbers remain high. Manistee is not nearly as affected by deep snows as counties just to the north. A low harvest last year due to warm weather during the firearm season and milder winters adds up to larger numbers of deer, especially in agricultural areas. This county will also have a large component of yearling bucks and an overall buck harvest as good as or better than last year. The other central counties should expect to see slightly lower buck harvests compared to last year. Acorn production is not very good this year, and most of the acorns scattered throughout these counties will be used up in the early part of the archery season. A few beech trees produced heavily but are well-scattered, and few beechnuts will remain into the archery season. Dry summer conditions will probably make corn ripen early, and most fields will have been harvested by firearm season. These factors will affect deer distribution as the deer season progresses. The best hunting opportunities exist on privately-owned lands, and deer numbers on public land in Osceola, Lake, and Mason counties will be down slightly from last year.

In the southern counties (Mecosta, Newaygo, and Oceana), deer numbers remain about the same as last year, with Mecosta County having the highest numbers out of the three. This year's excellent growing season for these counties should provide good opportunities on private land, so hunters are encouraged to contact landowners for permission to hunt these lands. Acorns are better than average this year although they seem to be falling early. Gray dogwood is producing a lot of soft mast this year, with blueberry and autumn olive berries falling below average in production. Hunters hunting the public land along both sides of the M-37 corridor will see more deer due to distribution patterns, but probably no more bucks than in past years. Best bets for public land hunters in Oceana County are national forest land adjacent to orchards or farm fields. In addition, areas that are wooded or have wetlands adjacent to agricultural operations will be holding good numbers of deer. Due to a second year of a three-year study on regulations, neither Oceana nor Newaygo counties will be open during the late antlerless season.

SAGINAW BAY MANAGEMENT UNIT

(Arenac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Huron, Isabella, Midland, Saginaw, Sanilac and Tuscola counties)

Contact: Douglas Reeves, 989-684-9141

The whitetail deer populations in Bay and Huron counties remain at goal for the second straight year. The deer population in the Shiawassee Flats portion of Saginaw County is slightly above goal after three consecutive years at population goal. Deer numbers in the remainder of the Management Unit are above goal.

In Huron and Sanilac counties, deer numbers are expected to be slightly lower. Tuscola County will have slightly higher deer numbers. Antlerless licenses for private lands in these counties will likely be available throughout the deer season. However, the availability of antlerless licenses on private lands is reduced this year. The deer harvest in the "Thumb" will likely be less than last year.

Deer numbers in Bay County should be about the same as last year. Saginaw, Isabella, and Midland counties should have higher numbers because last year's mild weather resulted in a lower than expected harvest and an increase in fawns this summer.

The deer populations in Clare, Gladwin, and Arenac counties are similar to recent years. However, lower numbers of 1½-year-old bucks are expected due to poor recruitment in 2001.

Deer hunting on public lands of the Shiawassee Flats in Saginaw County is by permit only. The deadline for pre-registered hunts on the Shiawassee River State Game Area (SGA) and the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge was in early September. For additional information about deer hunting in the Shiawassee River SGA call the St. Charles Field Office at 989-865-6211, and for information about deer hunting on the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge call the Refuge headquarters at 989-777-5930.

This will be the fourth year of the mandatory antler restriction regulation (Quality Deer Management) in the eastern portion of Clare County. Hunters in that area have been taking higher numbers of antlerless deer on their private lands and have been required to pass up smaller bucks during the past three hunting seasons. As a result, the deer population in that area appears to have an improved sex ratio, and there are increased numbers of 2½ and 3½-year-old bucks in the population.

Hunters and landowners in Huron, Sanilac, and Tuscola counties were surveyed in early 2002 to measure the support for a mandatory QDM proposal which would have required hunters to pass up any bucks that do not have four or more antler points on at least one antler. The proposal did not pass. However, where hunters practice voluntary QDM, more mature bucks are being observed in those areas.

Forest foods are abundant again this year throughout the Saginaw Bay Management Unit, and the harvest of most agricultural crops should be completed prior to the firearm season. As a result, hunters in good deer cover should have a very good season. Pre-season scouting to locate wild food sources will pay off for those who spend the time.

SOUTHEAST MANAGEMENT UNIT

(Genesee, Lapeer, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, and Wayne counties)

Contact: Tim Payne, 734-953-0241

Oakland, Genesee, and Lapeer counties contact: Julie Oakes, 248-328-8113

Oakland County-The overall population is slightly down, but there are still many "hot spots" especially in northeast Oakland County where deer numbers are high. Hunters who have access to private land should find deer hunting good.

Genesee County-The overall population is down slightly, but deer numbers are still good. There are no state lands in Genesee County, so all deer hunting efforts will take place on private lands.

Lapeer County-The deer population in Lapeer County is good and still at levels higher than desired. Crop damage complaints were down in 2002, but more likely a reflection of the poor dry growing season. The Lapeer SGA is over 8,000 acres and supports a stable deer herd. This game area should offer good hunting opportunity, but note that deer numbers are still higher on private lands.

St. Clair and Macomb counties contact: Ernie Kafcas, 586-465-7214

The deer population in St. Clair and Macomb counties has been on a slight downward trend over the past two-three years. Populations for these areas are close to goal. There are still a few localized areas within these DMUs that have higher populations. We expect the deer population in St. Clair and Macomb counties to be very similar to last year, and the deer kill to be a little better than last year with as good or better buck kill. Weather conditions and timing of harvest will certainly have an impact on success. There appears to be more corn planted this year throughout the area.

Monroe and Wayne counties contact: Joe Robison, 734-379-9692

Hunters are reminded that many of the more urban southeastern communities have various forms of firearm closures. Hunters should contact their local units of governments for questions dealing with these closures. Hunters should be especially careful in hunting these more urban areas and be thinking safety at all times. Respecting the property rights of others is the best way to ensure future hunting privileges for you and others. Do not enter upon lands of another without their permission. Hunting is still the most efficient method for controlling deer numbers and is an essential method for managing the southeast Michigan deer population.

Hunters need to scout potential hunting areas early as it is often difficult, if not impossible, to gain access to private lands once the season starts. There are some private lands open to hunting under the Hunting Access on Private Lands (HAP) program. Hunters are encouraged to check the HAP guide for these locations.

The deer population in Monroe and Wayne counties has been on a slight downward trend over the past couple of years. Populations for these areas are close to goal. There are still a few localized areas within these DMUs that have higher deer populations. The deer population in Monroe and Wayne counties should be similar to last year.

SOUTH CENTRAL MANAGEMENT UNIT

(Clinton, Eaton, Gratiot, Hillsdale, Ingham, Ionia, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Montcalm, Shiawassee and Washtenaw counties)

Contact: David Dominic, 517-373-9358

The South Central Management Unit should again lead the state in total deer harvest even though we are expecting a 7-10% smaller deer herd going into the fall deer seasons. The expected buck harvest should be similar to slightly less than the 2001 season while the antlerless harvest should be down approximately 7%. We will have a late firearm antlerless deer season on private land again this year but not all counties will be open. Of our 12 counties, Gratiot, Shiawassee, Ingham and Livingston will be closed. The season runs from December 23, 2002 to January 1, 2003. The counties with the highest deer populations are Jackson, Montcalm, Ionia, and Washtenaw. We have an adequate quota for private land antlerless deer licenses in hopes of lowering the deer populations in problem areas. We are still trying to lower our deer population throughout most of the Management Unit, and private land access is the key to any success we have. Hunters need to start early scouting and acquiring access to these lands.

While the corn crop in some areas developed poorly this year due to lack of summer rainfall, many areas have very good corn crops. Upcoming weather will strongly influence this year's corn harvest. Corn maturity is ahead of last year while overall production looks similar, and if fields stay dry, a significant portion of the corn will likely be harvested by November 15. Dry weather, especially in late summer, has dried standing corn significantly, and an early harvest should increase the deer harvest because of the reduced escape cover.

Hunters are encouraged to use antlerless licenses to harvest deer in all seasons, including the late antlerless season, which will be open in eight of our twelve counties. Natural deer foods, including acorns and apples, appear to be average to slightly above average throughout the Management Unit this year.

Hunters are encouraged to have their deer checked at one of the many deer check stations throughout the state. A Deer Management Cooperator patch will be given to hunters that participate. We are especially interested in information on antlerless deer.

Individual county information follows:

Washtenaw County: October 1, 2002 population is substantially over goal. Harvest for antlered and antlerless deer is expected to increase approximately 5% from 2001.

Lenawee County: October 1, 2002 population is slightly over goal. Harvest of both antlered and antlerless deer is expected to be down approximately 8% from the 2001 harvest.

Jackson County: October 1, 2002 population continues to be well over goal. Buck harvest has declined since 2000 and is expected to be down approximately 5% from 2001 harvest levels. Antlerless deer harvest is also expected to be down approximately 5%.

Hillsdale County: October 1, 2002 population continues to be well over goal. Harvest of antlered and antlerless deer is expected to be similar to 2001.

Montcalm County: October 1, 2002 population is slightly over goal. The 2002 harvest of antlered deer is expected to be similar to 2001, while the harvest of antlerless deer is expected to be down about 10% from 2001.

Ionia County: October 1, 2002 population continues to be well over goal. Harvest for antlered and antlerless deer is expected to be similar to the 2001 harvest.

Eaton County: October 1, 2002 population is moderately over goal. Harvest of antlered deer is expected to be down about 8% from 2001, and the harvest of antlerless deer is expected to be down about 7% from 2001.

Gratiot, Clinton, Shiawassee, Ingham, and Livingston counties: The five-county area will enter the fall deer season with a herd that is 7% lower on October 1, 2002 than in 2001. Liberal antlerless regulations in recent years have brought the herd closer to goal. Buck harvest is expected to be similar to 2001. Antlerless harvest will likely be down 4% from 2001. Gratiot, Shiawassee, Ingham, and Livingston counties will not be open during the late antlerless season. Hunters are encouraged to fill their antlerless tags early.

SOUTHWESTERN MANAGEMENT UNIT

(Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, St. Joseph, and Van Buren counties)

Contact: Michael Bailey, 269-685-6851

The deer herd in southwestern Michigan continues to be in excellent shape. Deer populations have generally stabilized for the unit as a whole. However, localized areas may have slightly more or slightly fewer deer than last year. These localized changes may be sufficiently large enough that hunters may notice the changes. Deer numbers continue to be very high in Barry, Calhoun and Kent counties. Portions of Cass, Branch, and Kalamazoo counties also have higher than desired deer populations. Deer are also becoming increasingly numerous in semi-urban and residential areas throughout southwest Michigan.

This year's corn crop appears to be on schedule even with a very wet, cold May and a mid-summer drought. Harvest dates should be close to normal. Hard mast is very spotty with some areas having almost no acorns, Allegan County, with other areas having a fairly decent year for both acorns and other hard mast, Kalamazoo County. Soft mast was especially hard hit by the late frosts and cold spring. Most fruits and berries were very limited, with apples being nearly non-existent.

Antlerless licenses are once again under a quota allocation in all southwest DMUs. However, hunters may purchase one private land antlerless license per day until the quota for that area is reached. All southwest DMUs have excess private land licenses. Hunters are urged to review the DMU numbering system to assure that they are obtaining licenses for the proper area. These antlerless licenses, plus the opportunity to use them during a special late holiday season, should result in the continuation of an excellent harvest of antlerless deer in this unit. Hunters should note that the late antlerless December season is not open in Berrien and Branch counties as part of a two-year study on the effectiveness of these seasons.

Hunters are urged to take advantage of the opportunity to assist in the proper management of the deer herd. The deer harvest in 2001 was down slightly from the 2000 harvest due to the very warm temperatures experienced during the 2001 hunt. This was the third year in a row where the total harvest was lower than the previous year. As the herd continues to decrease, as desired, the number of antlered bucks will also naturally be fewer and buck harvest will decrease. However, average body size of all deer and the average antler size of bucks should increase. Thus, hunters should expect to see fewer deer, but a slightly higher percentage of larger antlered bucks with bigger racks. This trend should continue as hunters, landowners, and the state cooperate in deer management. To achieve these improvements in the population, hunters need to continue an aggressive harvest of adult antlerless deer. It appears there was an excellent fawn crop in 2002, and hunters should take extra care to avoid harvesting button bucks, while maintaining the harvest of adult does. Landowners in areas of high deer populations appear to be willing to allow responsible hunters on their property. It is important to remember that access opportunities are most available to hunters who project a sportsmanship image and contact the landowner well before the season.